

## Student Major Selection

### Problem

Many students go to college to further their education and earn a degree for the job they want in the future, but are the majors students choose because that is what they love to do or is it because it is a good field to go into? A theory that I have made is that many students are initially drawn to the major that includes things they enjoy doing but several outside influences may sway them from their original choice or influence them to choose another major. For my research I will be using Meg G. Hancock and T. Christopher Greenwell's *The Selection of a Sport Management Major: Factors Influencing Student Choice from a Consumer-Oriented Perspective* (2014), Martin W. Moakler Jr. and Mikyong Minsun Kim's *College Major Choice in STEM: Revisiting Confidence and Demographic Factors* (2013), and Anil Kumar and Poonam Kumar's *An Examination of Factors Influencing Students Selection of Business Majors Using TRA Framework* (2013). Then I will be using data I have collected from interviews and to substantiate my research.

### Background

Business, management, and science majors are some of the most common college majors that students choose and are some of the largest majors in terms of students and opportunities they give students.<sup>1</sup> Having a degree in

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<sup>1</sup> INtroduce

one of these disciplines almost guarantees that students will have an opportunity available to them in the job market<sup>2</sup>. The reason for this is for the demand of jobs that students with a management, business, or science degree have is high because of the constant change in the economy and the constant need for medical or scientific professionals.<sup>3</sup>

According to the information that Anil Kumar and Poonam Kumar found while conducting their research for their article, *An Examination of Factors Influencing Students Selection of Business Majors Using TRA Framework* (2013), some of the main reasons or influences behind students choice of major is their social image or how they would be viewed such as certain majors being for people who are “boring” or “nerdy”.<sup>4</sup> In *The Selection of a Sport Management Major: Factors Influencing Student Choice from a Consumer-Oriented Perspective*, (2014) Meg G. Hancock and T. Christopher Greenwell found through their observations that gender had also been relevant in the number of students that were in certain majors, “tests revealed men and women differed on their perceptions of job salary,”<sup>5</sup> this appeared, to me, as an important factor that also goes along with the fact that students take into account the job availability and equality into their academic major decision.<sup>6</sup>

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In Martin W. Moakler Jr. and Mikyong Minsun Kim's *College Major Choice in STEM: Revisiting Confidence and Demographic Factors* (2013), the article authors suggest that students self confidence in their own academic abilities plays into their final decision in addition to the other factors explained in the other authors articles." Students with higher mathematics self-efficacy reported lower levels of math anxiety, higher levels of overall confidence, and a greater tendency to view math as being useful." While reading these three academic journals I found a lot of similarities between the information the authors wrote about and my initial ideas as to why students choose certain majors over others.

## **Method**

To answer my questions and follow up on the background information I found I decided to look more in depth at the most common academic majors in America and what the benefits were to choosing them. I also used some of the knowledge I have gained through my interviews to substantiate my thesis. I chose to use these methods because I felt that having some sort of background information about majors and their benefits would help give me a better understanding of why students would choose their specific major and what were their most important influences.

## **Findings**

Through some of my early research I have found that students tend to

choose majors that are connected to jobs in an open market, and that they will be able to use in any field.<sup>7</sup> Some of the highest populated college majors translate to the largest populated or most in demand jobs.<sup>8</sup> I feel that the reason for this is due to the continuously changing economy students want to be sure they have a sense of job security and flexibility to do whatever is available.<sup>9</sup> I also found that a common theme that professional studies have shown is that students tend to choose majors that have a higher social image or looks better. Also other often-overlooked factors are the various gender differences between certain majors and that many students choose to start college undecided. From the interviews I have conducted I found that many freshman students choose to start college undecided because of indecision as to what they wish to do in life. With the research that I conducted I saw many similarities between the research done in the articles and the people I interviewed, a trend with students is that they have several influences on their choice of major. The influences came down to job security, major flexibility, family and counselors, and personal choice.

## **Conclusion**

Based on the data I have collected, there are many factors that go into college students deciding to choose certain majors. Students have many different reasons and factors that go into their choice as a major. Family, counselors, job availability, and the ability to use their degree in a variety of ways depending on

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the broadness of the major are all very important reasons that had a strong impact on why I selected my major and they are some of the many reasons why many college students across the country choose theirs. While reading these journals I was very interested in how similar their findings and the research I conducted was to my own experience with choosing my major. My family, school counselor, and the job availability were all important factors that played into my major choice.

### Works Cited

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2. Kumar, Anil, and Poonam Kumar. "An Examination Of Factors Influencing Students Selection Of Business Majors Using TRA Framework." *Decision Sciences Journal Of Innovative Education* 11.1 (2013): 77-105. *Business Source Premier*. Web. 1 Mar. 2015.
3. Moakler, Martin W., and Mikyong Minsun Kim. "College Major Choice In STEM: Revisiting Confidence And Demographic Factors." *Career Development Quarterly* 62.2 (2014): 128-142. *Education Research Complete*. Web. 1 Mar. 2015.